

In addition, the NBII participates in the NATO Research and Technology Agency's Information Management Committee (IMC), which provides advice and expertise in applied information management to the NATO Research and Technology Organization. In 2002, the NBII began collaboration with the IMC

on a Science, Technology, and Research Network (STARNET). The purpose of this network is to facilitate access to information elements already existing within

NATO agencies and NATO member countries in science, technology, and overall research.

Through its international initiatives, the NBII helps ensure that the accumulated knowledge about the Earth's biodiversity is accessible to all.

For More Information

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NBII International Activities



A Global Network

Today more than ever, the need for biological information extends across international borders. That's why the National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII) <www.nbii.gov> emphasizes participation in a number of wide-ranging programs designed to make information housed in any part of the world available to researchers, managers, and policy makers worldwide. The NBII is a Web-based system, coordinated by the U.S. Geological Survey, that provides access to data and information on biological resources.

The NBII's international activities arise from a series of partnerships with complementary initiatives that seek to address formal international agreements that encourage scientific cooperation and data-sharing across a particular geographic region, from North America to the entire globe. While varying in scope and administrative origin, these initiatives are united by a common set of principles. All seek to make biodiversity data freely and easily available to a broad population of users around the world. To achieve this, all promote a common set of standards to ensure that the retrieval and exchange of information can take place across political, linguistic, and institutional boundaries. Finally, a fundamental requirement for participation in these international networks is that ownership of the data remains with its source. Some of our activities are described in this brochure.

GBIF

The NBII is assisting in the development and implementation of the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) <www.gbif.org>. GBIF is essentially a large network of affiliated national and regional databases and informatics initiatives, with all participants retaining rights and control over their own data. The NBII, the North American Biodiversity Information Network, and the Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network are all GBIF participants. The United States is a charter member of this

ambitious international effort dedicated to the standardization and global dissemination of the world's biodiversity data.

While focused initially on species- and specimen-level data, GBIF will eventually form a linked information network spanning all levels of biological organization, from genes to ecosystems. The GBIF network is anchored around the Catalog of Life, a standardized electronic index providing uniform taxonomy and nomenclature for all known living organisms. Through this index, users of the GBIF portal will gain access to the millions of records located in databases of the world's natural history museums, herbaria, and microorganism repositories.



IABIN

The Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network (IABIN) <www.iabin-us.org> and <www.iabin.net> is an initiative of the Summit of the Americas, supported by 34 national governments, as well as non-governmental organizations and the Organization of American States. The NBII serves as the U.S. node of IABIN

and directs this country's participation in the initiative.

IABIN participants are united in the belief that many current environmental problems – such as invasive

species, amphibian declines, and the spread of emergent infectious diseases – can only be effectively addressed through the establishment of a shared pool of knowledge. Such sharing reduces the duplication of research efforts, and informs managers and policy makers about what measures have and have not worked.

IABIN has moved forward with a series of projects designed to demonstrate the practical value of an inter-American network of biodiversity information. One of these, the Invasives Information Network, is a Web-based clearinghouse of information that will give researchers and managers easy access to the latest data pertaining to the spread of invasive plants and animals, a directory of organizations and individuals in Latin America and the Caribbean with expertise in the biology and control of invasive species, and links to projects.

A Global Environment Fund (GEF) grant is supporting a consultative process through which IABIN participants, in collaboration with the Clearing-House Mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity, are defining the approaches and technologies needed

to build the network. A detailed plan resulting from these consultations will become part of a proposal to the GEF for a full-size project grant for a 5-year effort to build IABIN. The initial proposal development, which was funded for the full amount requested, was led by the NBII.

CHM

The Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM) <www.biodiv.org/chm> of the Convention on Biological Diversity is a major initiative designed to facilitate worldwide scientific cooperation and information exchange on biological diversity. The CHM seeks to link, consolidate, and synergize the contributions of various global programs – including GBIF – dedicated to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. As an overarching network of global cooperation on these issues, the CHM strongly promotes international sharing of technology, information, and expertise. Such sharing can speed research and bring about more cost-effective decision-making, and facilitate implementation of conservation and biodiversity management initiatives. Although not a party to the Convention, the United States supports many of its goals and is providing technical assistance to the CHM through the NBII and IABIN.

NABIN

The North American Biodiversity Information Network (NABIN) <www.cec.org/nabin/> focuses on the ecological connectedness and common biological heritage of Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Administered by the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation (NACEC), NABIN provides a framework for

collaboration in the standardization and sharing of data among the nations of North America in such key areas as biodiversity protection and invasive species management. One important project originating under NABIN was the development of Species Analyst, a software tool that allows simultaneous searching of museum and biological collection databases throughout North America.

Other Partnerships

In many countries, scientists and informaticists are participating in the development of software tools and information standards that will facilitate the storage and exchange of biological data. As a leading player in the creation of the global infrastructure for biological information, the NBII maintains partnerships with, and provides training and technical expertise to, database facilities in various countries of the Western Hemisphere. Major partners include Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Environment Canada, and the Commission National para el Conocimiento y Uso de la Biodiversidad (CONABIO). The NBII

also supports the Canada/Mexico/U.S. Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management by participating in its biodiversity information activities. Recently, the NBII coordinated a plenary to examine the invasive species challenge as it relates to Trilateral Committee activities. This plenary was a successful example of trilateral and multi-agency collaboration.

NBII international activities extend to our membership in a range of organizations that share insights on scientific and technical information management and technology development. Examples include the International Council for Scientific and Technical Information, which offers a unique forum for interaction among organizations that create, disseminate, and use scientific and technical information; the International Organization for Plant Information, a Commission of the International Union of Biological Sciences that manages projects that aim to create databases of plant taxonomic information; and others.

NBII International Activities Online

The NBII has launched a new Web page featuring information about its growing portfolio of international activities. This page was conceived after the success of the NBII's International Resources Gateway, which was launched in late 2001. While the International Resources Gateway was designed to provide access to Web sites for foreign and

international biological organizations, the new International Initiatives Page <<http://international.nbii.gov>> is now the home for information about the NBII's program-level cooperation with other countries and international organizations. It also links to the already existing International Resources Gateway.

